

CONNECTICUT



SENATE DEMOCRATS

2010

**END OF
SESSION
REPORT**

ECONOMIC COMPETITION & FAIRNESS
GUN SAFETY • VOTING RIGHTS
CRIMINAL JUSTICE • EDUCATION
HEALTH CARE • ENVIRONMENT • ENERGY
A CONNECTICUT FOR ALL



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ECONOMIC COMPETITION & FAIRNESS

Creating Paid Family and Medical Leave ✔ S

In a United Nations survey of 185 countries, only two lacked paid family and medical leave programs: Papua New Guinea and the United States. One quarter of new mothers in the United States return to work just two weeks after their children are born. This program provides up to 12 weeks of paid leave for new parents, those taking care of seriously ill family members, and those caring for their own serious illnesses--thereby preventing the public from having to choose between work and family. Connecticut becomes the seventh state to offer this global standard to its residents.

■ Senate Bill 1: An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave

Raising the Minimum Wage to \$15 ✔ S

When costs rise but wages stay stagnant, it makes paying rent and utilities or providing for a family almost impossible. As New York and Massachusetts pass laws to raise the minimum wage, Connecticut cannot continue to lag behind. Senate Bill 2 will raise the minimum wage in Connecticut to \$15 by 2023 by implementing five minimum wage increases over the next five years. According to a Quinnipiac University poll, 63 percent of Connecticut residents support increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. This increase will keep up with rising wages, ensure businesses remain strong with competitive wages and give so many who are earning the minimum wage in this state a raise.

■ Senate Bill 2: An Act Increasing the Minimum Fair Wage

Continuing the Success of the Workforce Pipeline Initiative ✔ S

In 2018 Senate Democrats led passage of a Workforce Pipeline & Apprenticeship initiative to provide rapid work skills training for people seeking employment, then place up to 10,000 participants directly into good paying jobs with a bright future. In order to begin addressing the state's many workforce needs, a collaborative workforce training effort known as the Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative was established two years ago by Electric Boat, the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance, the Eastern Workforce Investment Board, and other partners. Through this effort 1,000 entry-level workers were rapidly trained and placed into jobs over a two-year period. This bill will establish a workforce pipeline and job creation task force to continue the positive progress of this initiative. With a track record of success, this is a proven model piloted by this effort, and it will expand to other sectors and areas of the state.

■ Senate Bill 5: An Act Establishing A Workforce Pipeline and Job Creation Task Force



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GUN SAFETY

Statewide Ban On Ghost Guns ✔ S

Ghost guns are increasingly becoming a problem across the country. These firearms can be made using a 3D printer and assembled with kits purchased online, allowing anyone to have access to an unmarked, unregistered firearm without a permit. Ghost guns have been seized in Torrington, Ridgefield and Waterbury, and these firearms have been used in mass shootings in California in 2013 and 2017. This session we passed a bill that will prohibit manufacturing a firearm without a serial number, manufacturing a plastic gun that can pass through security measures if its grips, stocks and magazines are taken off, and prohibits the possessing, receiving or transferring of an unfinished firearm frame or lower receiver lacking a serial number. Ghost guns are dangerous and difficult for law enforcement to trace, and banning these firearms will make our state safer for all.

■ House Bill 7219: An Act Concerning Ghost Guns

Ensuring Guns Are Stored Safely When Around Minors ✔ S

The tragic death of Ethan Song, the 15 year old Guilford boy who was accidentally killed by an improperly stored gun at a friend's house, rocked the state. In the aftermath of Ethan's passing, we've had an important conversation in Connecticut about safe storage of firearms—whether they are loaded or unloaded—when in a household with a minor. In response, we passed legislation which will strengthen our state's gun laws by requiring safe storage for all guns—loaded and unloaded—and increased the age restriction which requires gun owners to secure loaded or unloaded guns in locked containers from 16 years old to 18 years old. The legislation will also require the Connecticut Board of Education to develop a K-12 guide on gun safety. This bill prioritizes the lives of our state's young people while also educating them on proper gun safety.

■ House Bill 7218: An Act Concerning the Safe Storage of Firearms in the Home and Firearm Safety Programs in Public Schools

Ensuring Safe Storage of Firearms in a Motor Vehicle ✔ S

As gun thefts from cars rise throughout the country, this legislation will prohibit storing a pistol in an unattended motor vehicle, unless that pistol is in the trunk, a locked glove box or a locked safe. This legislation can reduce the up to 600,000 guns stolen each year and is another improvement to our state's gun laws to ensure the safety of each and every person in Connecticut.

■ House Bill 7223: An Act Concerning The Storage Of A Pistol Or Revolver In A Motor Vehicle



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VOTING RIGHTS

Moving Towards Early Voting ✔ S

Right now, 39 states across America provide their citizens with the opportunity to vote early. In 2016, about 27 million people across the country voted early. Unfortunately, none of them lived in Connecticut. Restrictive laws in Connecticut have prevented us from making democracy more accessible and convenient, and have prevented people from voting on their own schedules. Fortunately, we passed SJ 14, but not by the margins necessary to have it take effect in 2020. Instead, this bill will be referred once again to the 2021 state legislature, and if it passes there again, it will be put to voters at referendum in the 2022 general election ballot.

■ Senate Joint Resolution 14: A Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the State Constitution to Allow for Early Voting

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Improving Access to Evidence S

This bill would work with Rules Committee of the Judicial Branch to make recommendations on improving the procedures necessary to ensure the right to a fair trial is upheld, critical evidence is disclosed prior to plea deals, documents are not disclosed on the eve of trial, and witnesses are identified ahead of trial. We need to continue to examine and review our criminal justice system to ensure it works for everyone.

■ Senate Bill 653: An Act Concerning Open File Disclosure in Criminal Cases





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EDUCATION

Debt-Free Community College ☑ S

Connecticut has the third-highest student loan debt in the country, and the cost of public college education in the state has grown nearly three times faster than inflation in the last 50 years. This problem ties an anchor around recent graduates' feet, preventing them from starting their lives and families. Starting in Fall 2020, students in good financial standing will receive credit for the first 72 credit hours they take at state community colleges, allowing them to graduate without accruing debt. This provides students relief from crushing debt and strengthens Connecticut's workforce for the future.

■ Senate Bill 273: An Act Concerning Debt-Free College



Helping Pay Down Student Loan Debt ☑ S

Connecticut student loan debt more than doubled from 2008 to 2017. It is estimated that new college graduates in Connecticut carry over \$35,000 of student debt. This level of debt can affect where you decide to work, where you decide to live and what purchases (such as a house) you can make. In addition, Connecticut employers are struggling to fill positions in careers with shortages. This bill creates a tax credit program for businesses who help pay off the debt of their employees. By giving a credit of up to 50% (capped at \$2,625) to businesses who pay off the loans of their employees, we are giving businesses an incentive to hire people right here in Connecticut. Employees must have graduated within five years, which limits eligibility for the employer for five years of credits and only applies to loans issued by the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority. These credits can be deducted from corporate or insurance industry taxes.

■ Senate Bill 72: An Act Establishing A Tax Credit For Employers That Make Payments On Loans Issued To Certain Employees By The Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority



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HEALTH CARE

Raising the Smoking and Vaping Age to 21 ✔ S

Ninety-five percent of adult smokers started smoking before they turned 21. The lifelong consequences of smoking tobacco clearly damage public health, and we need to use every tool in our toolbox to prevent our young people from falling into this deadly habit. We also need to fight the nationwide epidemic of “vaping” among middle- and high-school students. We passed this bill to raise Connecticut’s smoking age, and the age at which someone can purchase tobacco products (including vaporizers and vaping liquid) from 18 to 21. In addition to raising the smoking age, the bill also increases penalties for tobacco sales for individuals under the age of 21, and it bans smoking and e-cigarette use on school and child care center grounds.

- House Bill 7200: An Act Prohibiting the Sale of Cigarettes, Tobacco Products, Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Vapor Products to Persons Under Age Twenty-one



Protecting Nursing Home Residents ✔ S

Patients in our state’s nursing homes are some of our most vulnerable residents, and they must receive adequate care and attention from staff. This bill requires nursing homes to post in a conspicuous space every day information regarding the number of advanced practice registered nurses, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nurse’s aides who will be providing direct patient care during each shift. The bill also allows DPH to take disciplinary action or issue a citation against a nursing home if the home substantially fails to comply with the state’s minimum direct care staffing requirements (i.e. 1.9 hours of direct nursing staff per resident per day). The home would have to post the staffing violation prominently on-site.

- Senate Bill 375: An Act Concerning Nursing Home Facility Staffing Levels

Treating Mental Health at Colleges and Universities ✔ S

College students have been diagnosed with depression, anxiety and panic attacks at increased rates in recent years. While up to 75 percent of mental illnesses arise before the age of 24, just one in five college students with mental illnesses seek help each year. This bill creates a task force to study current approaches to treating mental illness in higher education and find ways to improve them. Those recommendations will help us put a better support system in place, allowing students in crisis to find the help they need.

- Senate Bill 750: An Act Concerning the Prevention and Treatment of Mental Illness at Institutions of Higher Education



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ENVIRONMENT

Establishing Hemp Farming and Production ✔ **S**

Hemp has been grown for centuries for use in clothes, paper, and rope. There are over 25,000 different uses for industrial hemp, including fibers, textiles, paper, insulation materials, cosmetic products, animal feed, food and beverages. As such, the creation of a hemp industry in Connecticut could be a boon to our economy: it's estimated that one acre of hemp can generate \$37,500 to \$150,000 of gross revenues. That's why we passed a new law establishing an industrial hemp pilot program in Connecticut. With this program, farmers will have the opportunity to bolster their profits with hemp, and veteran and first-time farmers alike will be attracted to a new and growing market.

■ [Senate Bill 598: An Act Concerning the Submission of a Plan for the Production of Hemp in Connecticut](#)



Banning Off-Shore Drilling **S**

In 2018, the Trump Administration authorized offshore drilling and seismic surveying along the Atlantic seaboard, putting Connecticut's shoreline, the Long Island Sound and our coastal communities at risk. A 2013 study conducted by UConn found that CT's maritime industry has an approximately \$7 billion impact to our state's economy and contributes nearly 40,000 jobs. Although a federal judge has halted Trump's executive order, this bill would protect our environment and our economy by banning off-shore oil and gas exploration and drilling and seismic surveying within Connecticut's waters. Seismic surveying, which uses seismic airgun blasts, harms large marine mammals such as whales and dolphins who depend on sound and echolocation for communicating, feeding and mating.

■ [Senate Bill 588: An Act Prohibiting Off-Shore Drilling for Oil and Gas in Connecticut](#)



☑ Senate & House Passed S Senate Passed

ENERGY

Holding Utilities Accountable For Outages ☑ S

Connecticut faces the highest rates for electricity in the continental United States in both price and expenditure, but response times after power outages are growing, not shrinking. Customers deserve service that matches the cost. The Public Utilities Regulatory Authority will study industry standards for emergency response and staffing levels, with the intention of finding new mandates that will improve utility companies' response to future emergencies, bringing power back to homes and businesses faster.



- Senate Bill 469: An Act Requiring the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority to Establish Performance Standards and Minimum Staffing and Equipment Levels for Electric Distribution Companies

A CONNECTICUT FOR ALL

The “Time’s Up” Act ☑ S

Compared to other states, Connecticut’s statute of limitations for rape – just five years to bring a complaint – is one of the shortest in the country. Forty-five states have no statute of limitations for rape, or they have a longer limit than Connecticut. But our country is in the midst of a long- overdue reckoning regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment, and Connecticut can no longer lag behind other states in protecting victims of sexual assault. That’s why we passed a bill extending our statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes from 5 years to 20 years, extending the time limits people have to file lawsuits for sexual assault, allowing more time for criminal prosecution of sexual assault, and requiring more employer-sponsored sexual harassment training.

- Senate Bill 3: Time’s Up Act: An Act Concerning Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

Preventing Sexual Harasser Employees From Being Passed Along To Other Workplaces S

Harassment and sexual assault should not be tolerated in our workplaces. This bill would prevent employers from giving a job recommendation to an employee without also telling that potential new employer that the employee also had a history of sexual harassment or discrimination at their previous job. Additionally, the bill would prevent companies from mandating that an employee sign an overly broad “non-disclosure agreement” that could potentially prevent that employee from raising concerns about sexual harassment or other forms of discrimination in the workplace. These changes would create safer work environments for workers across Connecticut.

- Senate Bill 697: An Act Concerning Nondisclosure Agreements in the Workplace
- Senate Bill 761: An Act Concerning Honest Recommendations in the Workforce

☑ Senate & House Passed **S** Senate Passed

Ensuring Fair and Equal Pay for Equal Work **S**

While Connecticut has made great progress in recent years to help close the wage gap between men and women, there is still more work to be done. This bill would prohibit employers from counting certain types of leave against an employee's seniority if the employer uses a seniority system to defend its wage differentials in a gender wage discrimination lawsuit. In addition, by clarifying legal language and definitions, we can remove loopholes and prevent misinterpretations. We must do all we can to ensure that we are fighting for equal pay and closing the pay gap.

■ Senate Bill 765: An Act Ensuring Fair and Equal Pay for Equal Work



A Council on Protecting Women's Health ☑ **S**

If a federal agency changes the definitions of domestic violence and sexual assault, should Connecticut residents be concerned? If an administration dictates that overseas groups receiving U.S. health funds may not use this money to provide legal abortion services, what could possibly be the effect on Connecticut? If the Affordable Care Act is repealed, how does that affect health care in Connecticut? What about an Appellate Court or Supreme Court decision regarding abortion? These are all questions of great importance to Connecticut women and their families. That's why we created The Council on Protecting Women's Health, to monitor legislation and policy at the federal level and its potential negative impact women's health right here in Connecticut.

■ Senate Bill 394: An Act Establishing A Council on Protecting Women's Health

Protecting the Transgender Community ☑ **S**

According to the Transgender Law Center, Connecticut is in the top tier of states for laws protecting members of the transgender community. However, the current federal administration has taken several actions to backtrack on progress. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice reversed a policy that provided non-discrimination protections for transgender people in the workplace, and the Department of Education also reversed policy and will not take action on any complaints filed by transgender students who are banned from restrooms that match their gender identity. Given these developments, this bill would establish an advisory committee to inform the General Assembly whether our laws have been successful, and what changes may be necessary to ensure equality and opportunities for all residents of our state.

■ Senate Bill 792: An Act Creating an Advisory Committee to Study Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Expression That Occurs in Workplaces and Schools in the State

Increasing Access to Diaper Changing Stations **S**

If you've ever had to change a baby's diaper on your lap, or on the floor of a public restroom, or in a gas station bathroom, or on the counter at some public facility, you've probably thought, "There's got to be a better way." Add to this the fact that most diaper-changing facilities are located in women's restrooms, and that more men are caring for their children nowadays, and you've got the recipe for a diaper-changing disaster. That's why we passed a bill that would amend the state building code to require all newly constructed buildings with public restrooms to contain at least one safe, sanitary and convenient diaper-changing table for women and the same for men, on every floor that's open to the public.

■ Senate Bill 533: An Act Concerning Access to Diaper Changing Stations in Public and Commercial Buildings